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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this survey was to examine the trend among Illinois high schools of offering and requiring basic speech courses. It was hypothesized that the trend is increasing. Fifty Illinois public high schools received a seventeen-question questionnaire. The hypothesis was confirmed. (The questions and the responses to the survey are presented in table form.) (RB)

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRENDS IN SPEECH -COMMUNICATION IN ILLINOIS SECONDARY SCHOOLS: 1973

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRENDS IN SPEECH-COMMUNICATION IN ILLINOIS SECONDARY SCHOOLS: 1973

In 1966 the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Illinois Speech and Theatre Association jointly sponsored a survey of curricular speech and extra-curricular speech activities in Illinois. The conclusions of that study included the following:

> Based upon previous studies of basic speech course offerings in Illinois, the figures collected in the 1967-68 school year indicate the trend to offer basic speech courses and to require them is steadily increasing.[1]

Empirical observations have raised a suspicion that the trend has accelerated during the past six years. The suspicion led to a decision to make a limited survey of representative high schools in Illinois for data to use in comparison with selected portions of the Ince Study. Fifty high schools received a questionaire with seventeen questions (sixteen taken directly from the earlier study and one additional question. A careful

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[1] Robert Ince, "The Status of Secondary School Speech Education in Illinois," (Urbana, Illinois), 1968), p. 9.

effort was made to make the sample fairly representative of geography and population. Replies were received from thirty-four schools (68%). Whereas the Ince Study reported data in six school enrollment catagories, (0-499; 500-999; 1,000-1499; 1,500-2,999; 2000-,2,499; 2500-up), this survey collapsed those into three school enrollment catagories (0-999; 1,000-1,999; 2,000- up). This study was limited in scope to public secondary schools.

The data is here reported in table form preceded by the question asked and in some instances by this investigator's pertinent description of data from the earlier study. Each table,except the last,also includes the pertinent percent total from the corresponding table in the earlier study.

Question: Does your school offer a basic speech course?

Ince study: Highest percents were in school enrollment catagories over 2,000.

Question: Is the course required?

Ince study: Highest per cents were in school enrollment catagories over 2,000.

TABLE 1

	Offered		Required	
School enrollment				
0-999	100	-	60	40
1,000-1,999	100	-	78	22
2,000-up	93	7	40	53
Total	97	3	56	41
Ince Study *	80	18	26	54

* 2 per cent did not answer this question

Question: Does your school regularly participate in IHSA speech contests?

Ince study: Highest per cents were in school enrollment catagories over 2,000.

TABLE 2

	yes	no
0- 999	70	30
1,000-1,999	100	-
2,000-up	87	13
Total	85	15
Ince Study*	61	37

* 2 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: Does your school regularly participate in regional or league speech contests?

Ince study: Highest per cents were in school enrollment catagories over 2,000.

TABLE 3

	yes	no
0-999	70	30
1,000-1,999	89	11
2,000-up	80	20
Total	79	21
Ince Study*	53	43

* 3 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: Including the IHSA contests, how many speech contests does your school enter each year?

TABLE 4

School enrollment	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	25+
0-999	60	-	20	10	10	-
1,000-1,999	33	22	11	22	11	-
2,000-up	20	13	7	7	13	40
Total	35	12	12	12	12	17
Ince Study*	54	11	7	6	2	7

* 13 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: In which of the following catagories does your budget for contest work fall?

TABLE 5

School enrollment	less than $500	$500-$1,000	$1,000-$1,500	$1,500-$2,000	$2,000-up
0-999	60	20	-	10	10
1,000-1,999	44	11	11	-	33
2,000-up	20	7	7	13	53
Total	38	12	6	9	35
Ince Study*	50	8	9	3	7

* 24 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: Is your extra curricular program supported by the school?

TABLE 6

School enrollment	Yes	No
0-999	70	30
1,00-1,999	78	22
2,000- up	67	33
Total	71	29
Ince Study *	62	25

* 13 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: Are faculty in charge of the extra-curricular program given either released time or extra compensation?

TABLE 7

School enrollment	Yes	No
0-999	80	20
1,000-1,999	100	-
2,000- up	87	13
Total	88	12
Ince Study*	69	22

* 9 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: How many full length plays does your school produce each year?

TABLE 8

School enrollment	1	2	3	4	5+
0-999	20	50	30	-	-
1,000-1,999 *	-	33	33	33	-
2,000-up	-	33	33	27	7
Total	6	38	32	21	3
Ince Study**	15	44	20	5	5

* Rounding error totals 1 per cent.
** 11 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: Does your school normally present one act plays for audiences other than drama students?

TABLE 9

School enrollment	Yes	No
0-999	40	60
1,000-1,999	67	33
2,000-up	67	33
Total	59	41
Ince Study*	46	49

* 3 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: Does your school district sponsor any work in dramatics for elementary school children?

TABLE 10

School enrollment	Yes	No
0-999	30	70
1,000-1,999	56	44
2,000-up	47	53
Total	44	56
Ince Study*	27	63

* 9 per cent did answer this question.

Question: Does your school produce one or more musicals a year?

TABLE 11

School enrollment	Yes	No
0-999	60	40
1,000-1,999	100	-
2,000-up	93	7
Total	85	15
Ince Study*	56	41

* 3 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: How many teachers are involved in the supervision of dramatic activities?

TABLE 12

School enrollment	1	2	3	4	5+
0-999	50	20	10	20	-
1,000-1,999	-	44	33	11	11
2,000-up	7	13	40	20	20
Total	13	23	29	17	24
Ince Study*	37	27	18	5	8

* 4 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: In which catagory does your budget for the drama prograr fall?

TABLE 13

School enrollment	0-1,000	1,000-2,000	2,000-3,000	3,000-4,000	4,000-5,000	5,000-up
0-999	80	10	-	-	-	10
1,000-1,999	56	22	22	-	-	-
2,000-up	20	20	7	20	20	13
Total	47	17	9	9	9	9
Ince Study *	64	9	4	1	2	5

* 14 per cent did not answer this question.

Question: From which of the following sources does your drama program receive its financial support?

TABLE 14

School enrollment	SF	AR	D	SA	OS
0-999	70	90	-	20	-
1,000-1,999	56	100	11	33	22
2,000-up	67	93	-	20	13
Total	65	94	3	24	12
Ince Study	53	71	6	19	7

SF= School funds

AR= Admission receipts

D = Donations

SA= Student activities

OS= Other sources

note: percents total more than 100 because respondents were allowed to check all sources which applied.

Question: What is the title of your required basic speech course?

TABLE 15

Title	per cent of responses
Oral communication	32
Basic communication	5
Speech*	47
English	16

* Includes such variations as Speech I, Speech II, Freshman Speech, and Sophomore Speech.

Directions to respondents: Indicate your careful estimate of how many students at your school participate in the following activities.

TABLE 16

ACTIVITIES

IHSA	Total students	Number Schools	Ave. per school reporting	Ave. per school 0-999 catagory	Ave per school 1,000-1,999 catagory	Ave per school 2,000-up catagor
IHSA						
Extemp	79	26	3.0	2.9	2.4	3.6
Humorous Interp	89	29	3.1	2.2	2.9	3.5
Oratorical Dec.	56	24	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.1
Prose Reading	122	26	4.7	4.0	4.2	5.4
Dramatic Interp.	110	27	4.1	4.1	3.5	4.4
Special Occas Sp.	54	24	2.3	2.3	2.0	2.3
Original Comedy	64	25	2.6	3.2	2.5	2.3
Radio Speaking	89	26	3.4	3.9	2.5	3.8
Oratory	78	24	3.3	2.9	3.3	3.4
Verse Reading	108	28	3.9	3.6	4.0	3.9
Serious Duet Act.	132	26	5.1	4.5	4.4	6.0
Reader's Theatre	201	17	11.8	12.7	17.5	8.3
I Act Play	357	15	23.8	80.0	17.1	17.1
Debate	258	16	16.1	14.0	8.5	20.7
Other						
Public Debates	106	11	9.6	7.0	4.7	13.0
Public Forums	55	5	11.0	12.0	12.0	10.3
Non-contest Drama	2114	26	81.3	97.7	53.0	82.0
Oral Interp Festivals	162	9	18.0	31.3	10.0	12.7
Speaking over Local Radio & T-V	103	12	8.6	10.0	11.0	9.9
Speaking to Local Community Groups	219	21	10.4	10.3	5.7	12.2

Conclusions and Recommendations

Several broad observations can be made about the status of speech courses and speech activities in Illinois. First, the presence of speech-communication courses in secondary speech curriculia appears to be exploding. Table 1 clearly indicates that more schcols are offering speech courses and more schools are requiring a speech course. It is particularly interesting to note the very high per cent of schools offering and requiring courses in the small and medium size school catagories. Additional knowledge about the nature of the "explosion" is available from the question asking for title of the required course. Only 16 per cent (see Table 15) of schools use the course title "English." It is interesting to note that 37 per cent use some form of the word "communication" in the title of course. What isn't revealed in this survey is whether or not any change in the emphasis of course content has taken place since 1968.

Second, the trend of increased support for extra-curricular activities noted in 1968 has continued to increase. The increasing trend is observable in data from questions relating to extent of activity, financial support, provision of human support. For example, see Tables 2-14.

Third, a strong interest in non-competitive type speech activities appears to coincide with the growing trend observed in competitive type activities(see Table 16).

This survey did not address some of the most pertinent areas; such as, content of courses and preparation of those teaching. If there is in fact such an acceleration in the trend of offering and requiring speech courses, it would be helpful to know what is taking place in those courses and what can be known about the people teaching the courses. Answers to these uncertainties would be of obvious value to: the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction as it develops and implements a competency based certification system; the Illinois Speech and Theatre Association in its constant search to make convention programs relevant to membership needs; teacher education programs seeking to keep their professional preparation programs current and viable. Nothing less than a complete and comprehensive survey appears critical. It should be, in part, as similar to the 1968 survey for more reliable comparative observations.